

Shawnee Mission Early Childhood Center (SMECEC)

6701 W. 83rd Street
Overland Park, KS 66204
913-993-2600

Principal: Carla Heintz
Grades Served: PreK
KSDE Bldg #: 8770

Feeder Pattern: District Center



Notable School Characteristics

- Early Childhood special education program for students with disabilities who receive their special education and related services in programs designed primarily for students with disabilities, and may be integrated with non-IEP peers at a ratio from 0% to no more than 50%
- Program serving early childhood students ages 3-5
- Peer Model Program for students ages 3-5
- Trauma Smart School
- The Parents as Teachers Program is located within the building.

KSDE Building Report Card

No building report card available

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Needs Analysis

What barriers must be overcome for each student to achieve grade* level proficiency on assessments?

*Grade level proficiency is defined by state law as scoring “above level 2” on state assessments, yet actual grade level performance is most closely related to state assessment scores above level 1.

Our teachers, students and families face a variety of barriers in ensuring student proficiency at SMECEC. One of the barriers that we are working to overcome includes the fact that a majority of our students have some identified special need with various levels of severity, and they need a variety of support from a variety of resources. Access to these resources are often hard for our families to navigate on their own. Limited funding for special education and universal preK, in order to provide additional fully inclusive preK programming, create another barrier for our students and families. According to a policy statement on inclusion put out by the U.S Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human services (2015) it is critical for young children to have the opportunity to play and interact with peers with and without disabilities for increased proficiency across a variety of skill sets. Without sufficient funding the opportunity for access to inclusive early childhood programming is limited. Finally, retaining high quality staff and difficulty hiring new staff, both teachers and paraprofessionals, to support the needs of all of the students presents a barrier for grade level proficiency.

What budget actions should be taken to address and remove those barriers?

Given an appropriate level of funding for both general education and special education, there are a number of budget actions we could take to remove some barriers. Some of them include:

- Increased salaries to recruit and retain highly qualified certified and classified staff
- Full funding of special education and preschool programs from the state and federal levels
- Additional staff and resources (including, but not limited to, curriculum materials and furniture as the program expands) to meet the individual needs of our special education students and provide a more complete continuum of services, including increased inclusive settings for our PreK students.
- Additional staff and resources for the number of comprehensive evaluations necessary in early childhood
- Additional substitutes, including building substitutes, which would allow full coverage in classrooms at all times. It would also provide opportunities for staff at both the early childhood center and the elementary schools to observe students and work together to create the best placement as they transition into Kindergarten.

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How much time will it take for each student to achieve grade* level proficiency on the state assessments if the budget actions would be implemented?

*Again, state law defines grade level proficiency as scoring “above level 2” while actual grade level performance is most closely related to scores above level 1 on state assessments.

The ever changing population of students we serve, and the variety of abilities and disabilities of the students we serve, their age, and family involvement make it difficult to determine when all students will meet a singular level of proficiency.

In addition, lack of constitutional funding of special education continues to impact our ability to fully meet the needs of our students in a variety of ways and provide inclusive settings which are shown to boost overall academic achievement for all students, both with and without disabilities.

Fully funded universal pre K and early childhood special education programming will allow more students access to high quality, developmentally appropriate instruction at an early age which will increase state assessment scores in the assessed elementary grades. Once again, this funding also helps to create inclusive programming which has been researched to improve the outcomes for all students involved.

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Board Rationale/Comments

The Shawnee Mission School District maintains focus on its commitment to meeting aspirational state and district education goals for every student. The district continues to budget conservatively, working to limit central administrative costs to less than 5% of the total budget. Over the past several years, the district has focused on responding to challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including learning recovery, an increase in chronic absenteeism, and an enhanced need for social and emotional support for students.

The district has used information from needs assessments conducted at each building to make focused staff allocations at the building level. These include specific needs identified by large numbers of schools, including additional teacher allocations to maintain lower class sizes at the elementary level, providing a building substitute at each building, increased paraprofessional/teacher support in special education classrooms, and higher salaries for both certified and classified staff. In addition, following a comprehensive analysis of student needs, the district continues to maintain in the district budget a full-time social worker position in every school, a full-time instructional coach in every school, and Real World Learning counselors at each of the five comprehensive high schools.

The district was able to use additional state funding, (including an increase in the at-risk weighting and an increase to the base, along with a corresponding increase in the Local Option Budget) to add positions identified in individual building needs assessments across our 48 attendance centers/specialized programs. These positions include the following:

- 10 special education teachers, 5.25 para-educators, an autism coach, 2 speech language pathologists, an occupational therapist, 2 school psychologists, and 2 special education coordinators.
- 5 elementary interventionists
- An additional instructional coach for Horizons and for Early childhood
- 4 ELL teachers
- A teacher on assignment
- 3 floating nurses and
- 2 administrative interns

The district is also maintaining the following positions in the operating funds at least for one more year:

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- Elementary class size will remain at 22 for Kindergarten through 2nd grade and 25 for 3rd through 6th grades.
- Ten additional teachers at the secondary level to support learning recovery.
- At least one building sub at each building in the district.

The district will continue to analyze budget funds for the 2024-25 school year, in order to determine the ability to maintain the positions listed above that were added with ESSER funding: additional support for nursing services; additional secondary math teachers; building substitutes for every building; and class-size reduction at the elementary level.

Early childhood provides students an early start on their education. Universal funding for pre-kindergarten would go a long way in supporting the goal of kindergarten readiness, and ensuring that students are on-track for grade level proficiency. Such funding would also support providing equitable access to academic proficiency for all students, regardless of personal circumstances.

In addition, the district will continue to support increased professional learning opportunities for all teachers, with a focus on Professional Learning Communities and Response to Intervention. We will continue to prioritize equitable allocation of resources to create a welcoming and engaging learning experience for every student - facilitating personalized learning plans, targeting career and college readiness, with the interpersonal skills for life success.

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